

Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: _____ D. _____

Date: September 26, 2007

Topic: First Review of Request for an Alternative Accreditation Plan from Danville Public Schools for J. M. Langston Focus School

Presenter: Mrs. Kathleen M. Smith, Director, Office of School Improvement, Division of Student Assessment and School Improvement
Dr. Sue B. Davis, Superintendent, Danville City Public Schools
Mr. Andrew Tyrrell, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Danville City Public Schools

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Origin:

_____ Topic presented for information only (no board action required)

X Board review required by
_____ State or federal law or regulation
X Board of Education regulation
_____ Other: _____

_____ Action requested at this meeting X Action requested at future meeting: Final Review at Future Meeting

Previous Review/Action:

X No previous board review/action

_____ Previous review/action
date _____
action _____

Background Information:

The *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*, Section 8 VAC 20-131.280.C. states:

Subject to the provisions of 8 VAC 20-131-330, the governing school board of special purpose schools such as those provided for in §22.1-26 of the Code, Governor's schools, special education schools, alternative schools, or career and technical schools that serve as the student's school of principal enrollment may seek approval of an alternative accreditation plan from the Board of Education. Special purpose schools with alternative accreditation plans shall be evaluated on standards appropriate to the programs offered in the school and approved by the Board prior to August 1 of the school year for which approval is requested. Any student graduating from a special purpose school with a Standard, Advanced Studies, or Modified Standard Diploma must meet the requirements prescribed in 8 VAC 20-131-50.

Section 22.1-253.13:1.D.8 of the *Standards of Quality* requires local school boards to provide educational alternatives for students whose needs are not met in programs prescribed elsewhere in these standards. Such students shall be counted in average daily membership (ADM) in accordance with the regulations of the Board of Education. Regulations governing programs such as this are found in the accrediting standards, which permit alternative accreditation plans and allow the Board to grant waivers to certain provisions of the standards.

Summary of Major Elements

J. M. Langston Focus School is a newly created alternative school in the Danville Public School System designed to foster a learning environment for middle school and secondary students who have experienced academic and behavior difficulties in a traditional education environment. This school will prepare students in grades 6, 7, and 8 who are experiencing significant academic and behavior difficulties in a traditional education setting to successfully complete middle grade content with the goal of promotion to high school. In addition, this school will prepare students in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 who are experiencing significant academic and behavior difficulties in a traditional education setting to successfully complete secondary grade content and earn a standard diploma.

J. M. Langston Focus School serves students in grades 6 – 8 and 9 – 12 who are two or more years behind their age appropriate peers and are deficient in reading and mathematics as measured by the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement (KTEA) and/or who continuously experience behavior deficits that are outlined in the Danville school board's *Student Standards of Conduct*.

The instructional program at J. M. Langston Focus School in grades 6-8 focuses on reading, writing and mathematics. Students receive instruction in organization and study skills as well as in goal setting and problem-solving strategies. Interdisciplinary instruction addresses the history/social science and science content that is necessary for students to be successful in 9th grade entry level classes. In grades 9-12 the academic program focuses on the four core subject areas: English, mathematics, history /social science, and science. Students receive instruction and guidance in goal setting, career awareness, and post-secondary education. Credit recovery programs are provided to students in grades 9-12 using on-site technology and after-school programs.

Career exploration opportunities using internet resources will be offered to students in grades 6-12. Students will take aptitude and interest inventories to be used in planning academic and vocational choices.

J. M. Langston Focus School is staffed with a faculty of highly qualified teachers certified to teach the core subject areas proposed. Grades 6-12 teacher/pupil ratio will be limited to 1:15 per class. Paraprofessionals will be assigned to the school to serve as instructional assistants. Pupil support services will be on-site to assist students in grades 6-12 and their families with issues that serve as barriers to academic and behavior successes.

Grades 6-12 students will participate in grade level SOL tests and end-of-course tests. Student performance for accreditation will be determined based on the percent of students passing the following SOL tests: grades 6-7 reading, mathematics, and content specific history; grade 8 reading, mathematics, content specific history, and science; and SOL end-of-course tests. Scores of students in attendance for less than two semesters, including the semester in which the SOL testing takes place, will be considered

transfer students for the purposes of calculating the state accreditation ratings. Scores of students in attendance for two semesters or more, including the semester in which the testing takes place, will be included in the accreditation calculation.

A *SOL Alternative Accreditation Index* will be used to determine the accreditation ratings in reading, mathematics, science, and history and social science. The index includes points assigned for student performance on each of the SOL tests. The alternative accreditation will be calculated by multiplying the number of grades 6-12 students who receive an advance proficiency score by 100; the number of grades 6-12 students receiving a proficiency score by 90; the number of grades 6-12 students who receive a basic score by 70; and the number of students who receive a fail score by 0. The total points awarded will be divided by the total number of students tested as indicated below:

ALTERNATE ACCREDITATION INDEX POINT SYSTEM

<i>Number of Students Tested</i>	<i>SOL Scaled Score</i>	<i>SOL Proficiency Level</i>	<i>Points Awarded for each Proficiency Level</i>	<i>Points Awarded</i>
	600-500	Advanced	100	
	499-400	Proficient	90	
	399-375	Basic	70	
	Below 375	Fail	0	
(A)Total Number of Points Awarded				
(B)Total Number of Grades 6-12 Students Tested				
Alternative Accreditation Index Score = (A)/(B)				

An Alternative Accreditation Index Score of at least 70 points must be earned in each of the four core subjects (English, mathematics, science, and history /social science) to meet fully accredited status.

Due to the time required to address the academic needs of students in the four core subject areas, foreign language and fine arts will not be offered to students in grades 6-12. Therefore, the J. M. Langston Focus School is requesting waivers from 8 VAC 20-131-90 A-C and 8 VAC 20-131-100 A-B:

8 VAC 20-131-90. Instructional program in middle schools

- A. The middle school shall provide each student a program of instruction, which corresponds, to the Standards of Learning for English, mathematics, science, and history/social science. In addition, each school shall provide instruction in art, music, foreign language, physical education and health, and career and technical exploration.
- B. The middle school shall provide a minimum of eight courses to students in the eighth grade. Courses in English, mathematics, science, and history/social science shall be required. Four elective courses shall be available: level one of a foreign language, one in health and physical education, one in fine arts, and one in career and technical exploration.
- C. Level one of a foreign language shall be available to all eighth-grade students. For any high school credit-bearing course taken in middle school, parents may request that grades be omitted from the student’s transcript and the student not earn high school credit for the course in accordance with policies adopted by the local school board. Notice of this provision must be provided to parents

with a deadline and format for making such a request. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to prevent a middle school from offering any other credit-bearing courses for graduation.

8 VAC 20-131-100. Instructional program in secondary schools

- A. The secondary school shall provide each student a program of instruction in the academic areas of English, mathematics, science, and history/social science that enables each student to meet the graduation requirements described in 8 VAC 20-131-50 and shall offer opportunities for students to pursue a program of studies in foreign languages, fine arts, and career and technical areas including:
 - 1. Career and technical education choices that prepare the student as a career and technical education program completer in one of three or more occupational areas and that prepare the student for technical or preprofessional postsecondary programs;
 - 2. Coursework and experiences that prepare the student for college-level studies including access to at least three Advanced Placement (AP) courses, college-level courses for degree credit, International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, Cambridge courses, or any combination thereof;
 - 3. Preparation for college admissions tests; and
 - 4. Opportunities to study and explore the fine arts and foreign languages.
- B. Minimum course offerings for each secondary school shall provide opportunities for students to meet the graduation requirements stated in 8 VAC 20-131-50 and must include:

English	4	
Mathematics	4	
Science (Laboratory)	4	
History and Social Sciences	4	
Foreign Language		3
Electives	4	
Career and Technical Education	11	
Fine Arts	2	
Health and Physical Education	2	
Total Units	38	

Superintendent's Recommendation:

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education accept for first review the alternative accreditation plan from Danville City Schools for J. M. Langston Focus School.

Impact on Resources:

None

Timetable for Further Review/Action:

Final action will be requested at a future meeting.

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF AN ALTERNATIVE ACCREDITATION PLAN

Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia, (8 VAC 20-131-10 et. seq.) set the minimum standards public schools must meet to be accredited by the Board of Education. Accreditation of public schools is required by the Standards of Quality (22.1-253.13:1 et. seq.). The annual accrediting cycle for public schools is July 1 through June 30. This cover sheet, with the supporting documentation, must be submitted to the Department of Education for review and recommendation to the Board at least 90 days prior to August 1 of the school year in which the plan is to be implemented.

8 VAC 20-131-280 of the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* states (in part): *Special purpose schools such as regional, special education, alternative, or career and technical schools that serve as the student's school of principal enrollment shall be evaluated on standards appropriate to the programs offered in the school and approved by the Board prior to August 1 of the school year for which approval is requested. Any student graduating from a special purpose school with a Standard, Advanced Studies, or Modified Standard Diploma must meet the requirements prescribed in 8 VAC 20-131-50.*

The Board of Education, in its *Guidelines Governing the Implementation of Certain Provisions of the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*, states:

Schools described in this section are those that serve as a student's school of principal enrollment and where students are reported in full membership for the school. Fall membership determines whether or not these schools are subject to the provisions of the accrediting standards; therefore, schools reporting full membership are subject to the provisions of the standards. These schools may or may not administer Standards of Learning (SOL) tests.

In accordance with the provisions of 8 VAC 20-131-330 of the standards, local school boards may seek waivers of provisions of the standards to address the unique needs of these special purpose schools. Such requests may include an alternative accreditation plan. Applications must be submitted to the Board for consideration at least ninety days prior to August 1 of the school year. Requests for consideration must be accompanied by information that documents the need for approval of the request.

We, the undersigned, submit this request for review and approval by the Board of Education and understand that we are expected to appear before the Board to discuss the program and respond to questions raised.

September 6, 2007
Date Approved
by the Local School Board

George M. Wilson
Signature
Chairman of the School Board

September 11, 2007
Submission Date

Lee B. Davis
Signature
Division Superintendent

**DANVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
J. M. LANGSTON FOCUS SCHOOL
DANVILLE, VIRGINIA**

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF AN ALTERNATIVE ACCREDITATION PLAN

INTRODUCTION:

J. M. Langston Focus School is a newly created alternative school in the Danville Public School System. Langston meets the state definition of a special purpose school and seeks approval for an alternative accreditation plan as provided in the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia, Part VIII, Section 8 VAC 20-131-280 D.

INTENT:

To prepare students in grades 6, 7, and 8 who are experiencing significant academic and behavior difficulties in a traditional education setting to successfully complete middle grade content with the goal of promotion to high school. To prepare students in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 who are experiencing significant academic and behavior difficulties in a traditional education setting to successfully complete secondary grade content and earn a standard diploma.

VISION/MISSION:

J. M. Langston Focus School is designed to foster a learning environment for middle and secondary grade students who have experienced academic and behavior difficulties in a traditional education environment.

TARGET POPULATION:

J. M. Langston Focus School serves students in grades 6 – 8 and 9 – 12 who are overage and/or under credited, and are deficient in reading and math as measured by the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement (KTEA) and/or who continuously experience behavior deficits that are outlined in the school board's *Student Standards of Conduct*.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM:

- Grades 6-8 academic program will focus on reading, writing and mathematics. Students will receive instruction in organization and study skills as well as goal setting and problem-solving strategies. Interdisciplinary instruction will address the history and science content that is necessary for students to be successful in 9th grade entry level classes. Grades 9-12 academic program will focus on the four core subject areas English, mathematics, history and social science, and science. Students will receive instruction and guidance in goal setting, career awareness, and post-secondary education.
- Students will be administered the KTEA assessment in reading and mathematics prior to entering the program to assist teachers with the development of a differentiated instructional program that addresses the needs of each student.
- Grades 6-12 students will have opportunities for career exploration offered using internet resources. Students will take aptitude and interest inventories to be used in planning academic and vocational choices.
- Credit recovery programs will be provided to students in grades 9-12 using on-site technology and after-school programs.
- Students will be given additional time to master specific course objectives; particularly, courses that have an EOC/SOL test. This decision will be based on students' six weeks benchmark

assessment scores, and/or social, and/or environmental issues. Students needing additional time will take the EOC/SOL test during the next SOL test administration.

- A 30-minute lunch and recess will allow students time to eat and engage in physical activities.

STAFFING:

J. M. Langston Focus School is staffed with a faculty of highly qualified teachers certified to teach the core subject areas proposed. Grades 6-12 teacher/pupil ratio will be limited to 1:15 per class.

Paraprofessionals will be assigned to the school to serve as instructional assistants. Pupil support services will be on-site to assist students in grades 6-12 and their families with issues that serve as barriers to academic and behavior successes.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION:

The KTEA will be administered to each student in reading and mathematics prior to program entry. The results will be used as entry baseline data for each student and to assistance in instructional planning.

Students will be administered benchmark assessments each six weeks in the core subject areas, with the achievement data tracked and analyzed. Grades 6-12 students will participate in the Virginia Standards of Learning Assessment Program.

WAIVER REQUESTED:

Due to the time required to address the academic needs of students in the four core subject areas, foreign language and fine arts will not be offered to students in grades 6-12. Therefore, the J. M. Langston Focus School is requesting waivers from 8 VAC 20-131-90 A., 8 VAC 20-131-90 B., 8 VAC 20-131-90 C., 8 VAC 20-131-100 A., and 8 VAC 20-131-100 B. of the Standards of Accreditation that require foreign language and fine arts.

ACCREDITATION:

Grades 6-12 students will participate in grade level SOL tests and end-of-course tests. Student performance for accreditation will be determined based on the percent of students passing the following SOL tests: grades 6-7 reading, mathematics, and content specific history; grade 8 English, mathematics, content specific history, and science; and SOL end-of-course tests. Scores of students in attendance for less than two semesters, including the semester in which the SOL testing takes place, will be considered transfer students for the purposes of calculating the state accreditation ratings. Scores of students in attendance for two semesters or more, including the semester in which the testing takes place, will be included in the accreditation calculation. Due to the small student population, a composite pass rate is necessary to create a larger number of student scores upon which to calculate state accreditation. The accreditation ratings are: grades 6-12 English-70%; mathematics-70%; history and social science-70%; and science-70%.

A SOL Alternative Accreditation Index will be used to determine the accreditation ratings in English, mathematics, science, and history and social science. The index includes points assigned for student performance on each of the SOL tests. The alternative accreditation will be calculated by multiplying the number of grades 6-12 students who receive an advance proficiency score by 100; the number of grades 6-12 students receiving a proficiency score by 90; the number of grades 6-12 students who receive a basic score by 70; and the number of students who receive a fail score by 0. The total points awarded will be divided by the total number of students tested. (See Table 1.)

Table 1

ALTERNATE ACCREDITATION INDEX POINT SYSTEM

<i>Number of Students Tested</i>	<i>SOL Scaled Score</i>	<i>SOL Proficiency Level</i>	<i>Points Awarded for each Proficiency Level</i>	<i>Points Awarded</i>
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PROGRAM EVALUATION:

The effectiveness of the program will be evaluated using several criteria. Student achievement will be monitored using report card grades, six weeks benchmark assessments, and spring SOL test results. Student attendance and behavior will be monitored weekly by using the StarBase student management system to track attendance and violations of the *Student Standards of Conduct*. Mid-year and end-of-the-year surveys will be distributed to students and parents to gather data for school improvement.

TRANSITION PLAN:

Students and their parents will be interviewed face-to-face by the director of Alternative Education, and the principal, guidance counselor, and curriculum facilitator of Langston School. The purposes of this interview are: (1) to explain the academic and behavior expectations of students entering J. M. Langston Focus School; and (2) to explain the different support services available to students and parents of J. M. Langston Focus School.

**Virginia Department of Education
Evaluation Criteria
J. M. Langston Focus School, Danville Public Schools
Alternative Accreditation Plans for Special Purpose Schools**

Criteria	Yes	No	Limited
School characteristics and instructional program:			
1. The mission, purpose, and target population of the school justify its categorization as a “special purpose” school and, therefore, eligible to request an alternative accreditation plan.	√		
2. The characteristics and special needs of the student population are clearly defined, and the criteria for student placement require parental consultation and agreement.	√		
3. The program of instruction provides all students with opportunities to study a comprehensive curriculum that is customized to support the mission of the school. <i>The plan requests a waiver of 8 VAC 20-131-90 A-C and .8 VAC 20-131-100 A-B.</i>			√
4. The school provides transition planning to help students be successful when they return to a regular school setting.	√		
5. Strategies used to evaluate student progress are aligned to the mission/purpose of the school and include academic achievement measures.	√		
6. Convincing evidence has been provided that students enrolled in the school have not been successful in other schools subject to all the accrediting standards.	√		
7. Students will be taught with highly qualified teachers who meet the Board of Education’s licensure requirements for instructional personnel.	√		

Alternative Accreditation Accountability Criteria:			
<p>1. Rationale and documentation provide convincing evidence that the “special purpose” nature of the school precludes its being able to reach and maintain full accreditation status as defined in the <i>Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia</i> (SOA).</p> <p><i>Bonus points need to reflect the mission of the school.</i></p>			√
<p>2. Alternative accreditation criteria described in the plan include academic achievement measures that are objective, measurable, and directly related to the mission and purpose of the school.</p>	√		
<p>3. The plan includes use of statewide assessment student achievement results of English and mathematics.</p>	√		
<p>4. The plan meets the testing requirements of the SOA.</p>	√		
<p>5. The plan meets the testing requirements of NCLB and describes how the school plans to meet “adequate yearly progress” requirements of the federal law.</p> <p><i>The plan does not specifically state that students will be tested as required by NCLB.</i></p>			√
<p>6. The plan provides convincing evidence that all pre-accreditation eligibility criteria are met for standards in which waivers have not been requested.</p>	√		
<p>7. Waivers have been requested for accrediting standards that are not being met, and the rationale for the waivers are clear and appropriate for the mission/purpose of the school.</p>	√		